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The Gumshoe

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Soviet military intelligence (GRU) has had a bad time in the past two years. First, one of its top officers, Anatoli Dolnytsin, defected to the Americans by way of Finland. Then, personable GRU Col. Oleg Penkovsky—a Kremlin favorite—turned out to be working for the CIA. That disaster cost GRU's chief, Gen. Ivan Serov, both his job and his freedom. Serov was already under house arrest when GRU suffered its third catastrophe—the unmasking of one of its finest agents, Sweden's Col. Stig Wennerström. Last week reports reached Washington that the hard-hit spy organization has a new boss, 58-year-old Col. Gen. Pyotr Ivanovich Ivashutin.

Western intelligence officers believe the new appointment will hurt GRU almost as much as its recent disasters. They say that Ivashutin is nothing but a "security officer," a product of the now-defunct SMERSH.* And there is no greater disdain in Russia or the U.S. than that of an intelligence agent for a security officer. One old hand said: "It's almost as if J. Edgar Hoover had been appointed director of CIA."

Experts on Soviet intelligence activities are convinced that Nikita Khrushchev picked Ivashutin to clean house in GRU and tighten security. But they also believe that the agency's worldwide activities will be seriously crimped with a gumshoe at its head. One of them said hopefully: "GRU officers will be so busy looking over their shoulders, they won't have time to run operations."

*Yes, James Bond fans, there was a SMERSH. It was the Red Army's counterintelligence arm.

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